

VIKTOR KAGANOVICH

# ***FULLY INSURED***

HAND-PAINTED LORRIES OF SRI LANKA



## **INTRODUCTION**

This project had been completed in the course of my Srilankan vacation, in January 2002. It is a photographic study of hand-painted lettering (as well as beautiful woodcarving) that adorns many Sri Lankan lorries.

The styles of lettering vary from trompe-l'oeil and 3D-effects to fantastic majuscules and illuminated letters, from fanciful rococo to americana.

250 slides — depicting over 100 lorries in more than 80 unique styles — have been selected for publication. Interested parties are kindly encouraged to contact me via email: [mail@viktorkaganovich.com](mailto:mail@viktorkaganovich.com)

To *Chintha*

**FULLY INSURED**

Hand-Painted Lorries of Sri Lanka

© 2002 Viktor Kaganovich

Proposed format: quality trade paperback,  
perfect bound, 120 pages (appr.), 200x180mm

For more information, see [viktorkaganovich.com/fullyinsured.html](http://viktorkaganovich.com/fullyinsured.html)

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HAND-PAINTED LORRIES OF SRI LANKA

lapidar book  
proposal



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## WORLDS WITHIN LETTERS

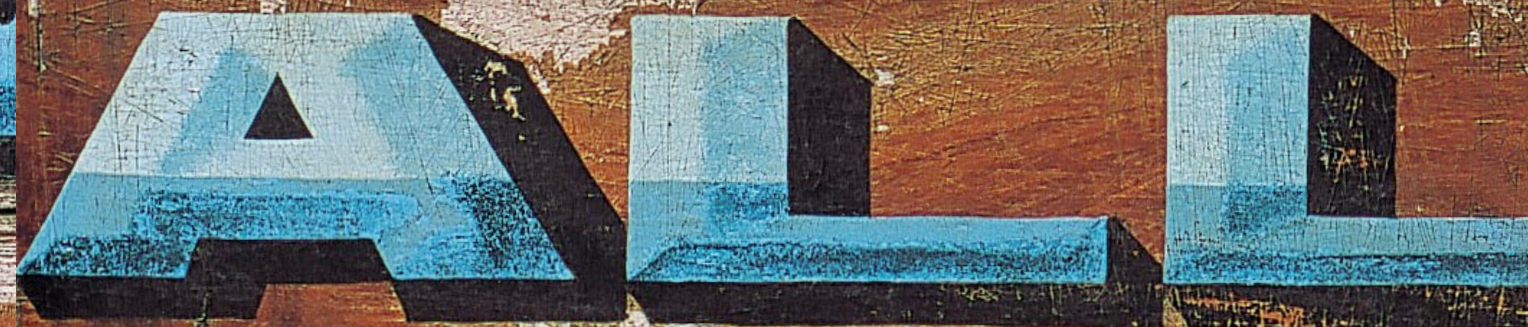
Walled-in on both sides by jungle, a nearly permanent cloud of khaki-coloured dust hangs over Sri Lankan roads. Through these dust tunnels hurtle island's most important means of in-land shipping — lorries.

Mostly aging Indian Tatas and Ashok Leylands, these lorries represent a wonderful counterpoint to the spartan lines of European Modernism. The sideboards of the lorries' cargo holds are usually hand-lettered with a company name, and the best Sri Lankan sign-painters devise entire worlds within these mundane markings. Done with fantastic variety of colour and typographic whimsy, decorated with rainbow effects and multifaceted shadings, these inscriptions gleam like gems in the stark tropical sun. *(continued p. 17)*





*Ratana*



BODY BUILT BY  
**CHATHURANGA MOTORS**  
TANGALLE.  
PHONE. 047-40453





**CIRCLE THE WAGONS**

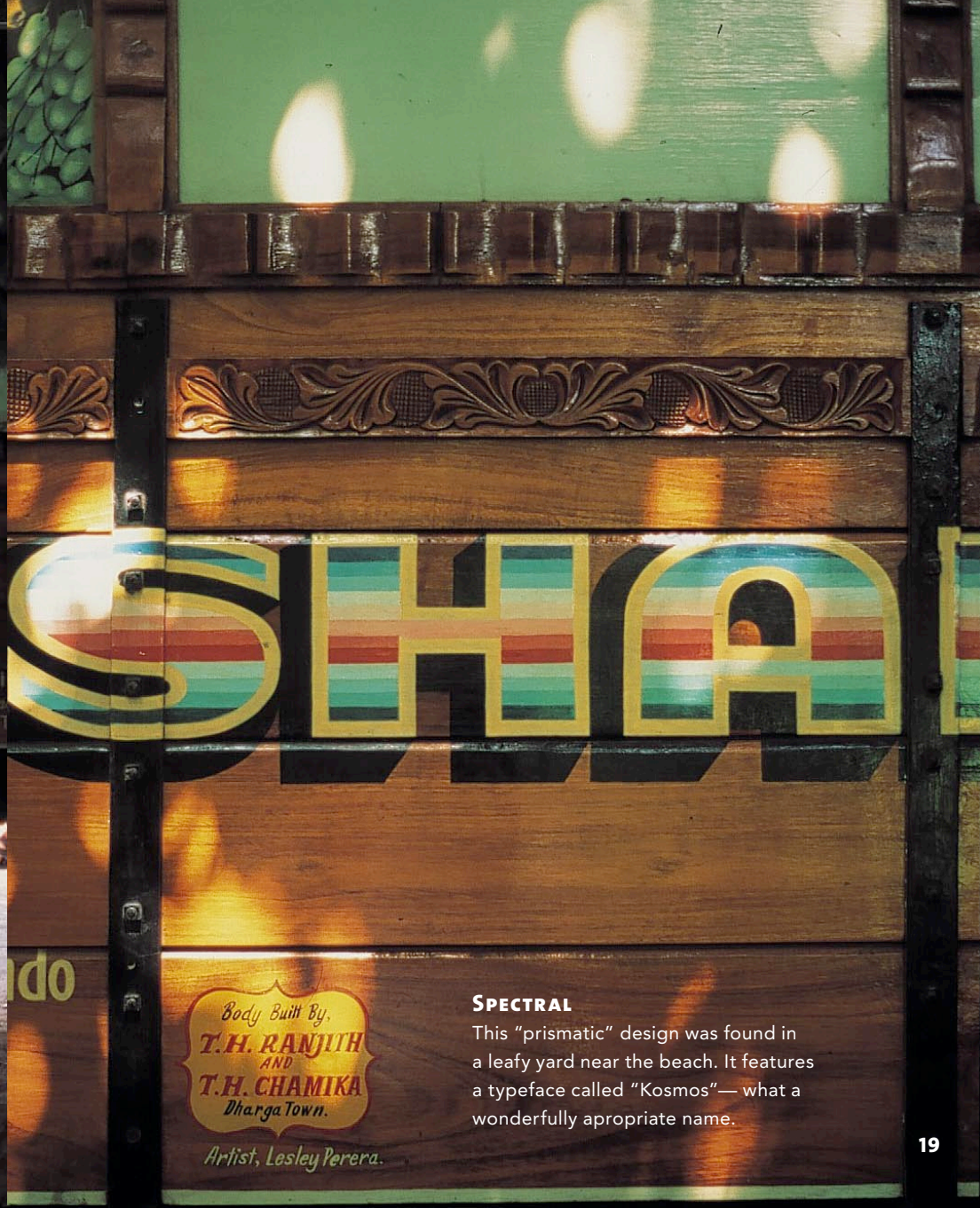
This absolutely singular design wouldn't be out of place above a cowboy saloon. Simple and robust typography, the blue is wonderfully accented by the warm yellow and red.



*(continued from p. 9)*

By the standards of the focus-group vetted "Graphic Design", most of these lettering styles would be considered naïve; but to submit them to the judgment of the conventional taste would mean to miss their point: these inscriptions reveal their beauty in stages, respective of one's position, and whether one sees them in their entirety or in a close-up, speeding or still. As lorries careen down the jungle roads, outlines, fills and miniatures, intersecting facets and shadings dash through one's field of vision, inducing a kaleidoscopic, well-nigh hypnotic effect.

Creative exuberance and sumptuous colours of these hand-lettered masterpieces belie a fallacy at the core of the modernist austerity — though synonymous with "good taste", minimalism does not equal beauty.



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Body Built By.  
**T.H. RANJITH**  
AND  
**T.H. CHAMIKA**  
Dharga Town.

Artist, Lasley Perera.

**SPECTRAL**

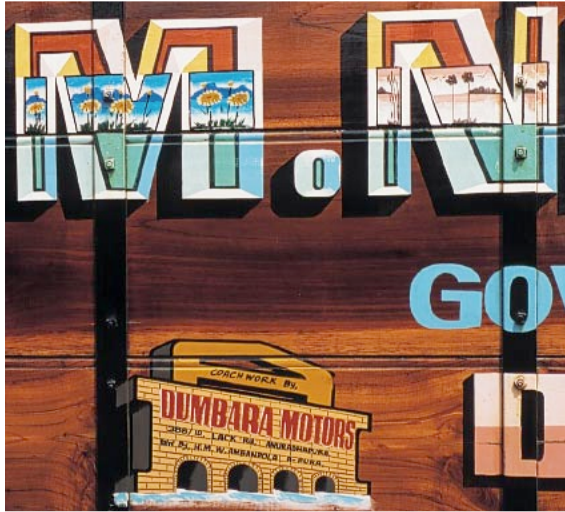
This "prismatic" design was found in a leafy yard near the beach. It features a typeface called "Kosmos"— what a wonderfully appropriate name.



#### ECLECTICISM AND WHIMSY

This lorry is actually not decorated at all on the sides, but makes up for it by the visual excess on its stern: Bamby frolics together with Dino, and slab-serifs are decorated in what can only be termed “Louis XIV Psychodelic” style.





**About the Photos:**

With very few exceptions, photos were shot on Provia 100ASA 35mm film. In many cases, field conditions precluded an exact orthogonal view, resulting in skewed angles (road dust, soot and fumes did not help, either).

**About the Author:**

Viktor Kaganovich was born in the Ukraine; played jazz, studied psychology and began his graphic design career in New York. He is now based in Hamburg and likes nothing more than to pay convoluted homages to the design styles of the past. To find out more, see <http://mentalitydesign.com>



**Jully**